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Seek auto in Skolnick mystery

By Edmund J. Rooney

Chicago police Tuesday issued a statewide alert for the red 1973 Ford Pinto station wagon that legal researcher Sherman Skolnick and his driver were using when the two allegedly disappeared.

"We are taking their disappearance seriously," said Lt. Vincent Burke of the Burnside Area youth division. The youth division investigates all missing person reports.

One of Skolnick's aides, Leland Cole, 23, reported the two men missing Monday after they failed to return from a meeting. Cole said he was confident the disappearance was not a hoax or press agent's stunt.

"I KNOW THAT Sherman wouldn't put his career on the line for a hoax," said Cole. "Until we find Sherman, we will have no idea why he disappeared or what has happened to him."

Cole told police that Skolnick, a paraplegic, and his driver, David Hoffman, 30, who is without an arm below the left elbow, drove away from Skolnick's home office at 9800 S. Oglesby, at 8:15 a.m. Monday, in the red station wagon.

Cole said Skolnick left orders to report him missing if he did not return or telephone Cole by 9 a.m. Monday. Cole said he waited until 10:15 a.m. before calling police. The station wagon is new and did not bear license plates.

Skolnick is chairman of the Citizens Committee to Clean Up the Courts, which has charged that federal agents may have seized Skolnick because of documents he allegedpossessed about the Watergate affair.